

596



THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN

BENDIS
CASELLI
MALEEV
GRACIA

LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT.

TONY STARK IS MISSING AND MAYBE EVEN DEAD...

...AND ALTHOUGH HE VERY PUBLICLY GAVE ME THE THUMBS-UP TO CONTINUE BEING MY VERSION OF THE ARMORED AVENGER **IRONHEART**, YOU GUYS FROM STARK ENTERPRISES, OR WHATEVER YOU CALL YOURSELVES THIS WEEK, ARE HERE TO TAKE ALL OF MY STUFF?!

WHY DON'T YOU GUYS GO AFTER DOCTOR DOOM?

DOCTOR DOOM IS FLYING AROUND PRETENDING TO ACTUALLY BE **IRON MAN**!

I DON'T SEE YOU MESSING WITH THE DEPOSED **BILLIONAIRE MONARCH OF LATVERIA**!

JUST SOME KID IN HER GARAGE.

OR BETTER YET...WHY AREN'T YOU ALL LOOKING FOR **TONY STARK**?

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHERE **TONY STARK** IS?

THIS IS WHAT YOU'RE FOCUSED ON.

YOU'RE GOING TO COME HERE AND TAKE WHAT'S MINE BECAUSE YOU THINK, TECHNICALLY, LEGALLY, IT'S YOURS...

WELL, MISS WILLIAMS, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...

THE SEARCH FOR TONY STARK PART FOUR

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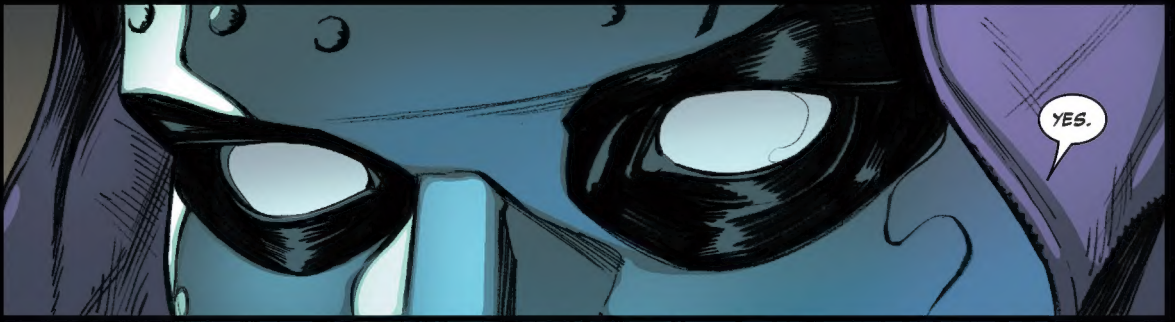
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YES.



WELL, I HOPE YOU WORE COMFORTABLE SHOES, IRON MAIDEN, BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO BE HERE ALL--



WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?



YOU'RE RIGHT.

TAKE IT.

WHAT?



UH...



I DID REVERSE ENGINEER SOMEONE ELSE'S TECH.

IT'S NOT MINE.

IT'S THEIRS.

TONY STARK'S NOT HERE TO BACK ME UP.

IT'S LEGALLY THEIRS.

TAKE IT.





NO, I AM NOT JOKING!

I WANT YOUR NAME. I WANT YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER!

I WANT YOUR SUPERVISORS' NAMES AND THEIR NUMBERS AS WELL--

YEAH, THEY'RE NOT LISTENING.



WELL, THAT WAS COMPLETELY EMBARRASSING.

HI.

SORRY, XAVIER.

SORRY?

SORRY WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER IN FOREVER AND THEN YOU WERE HERE TO SEE THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE!



THIS IS THE WORST DAY OF YOUR LIFE?

THIS IS THE COOLEST DAY OF MY LIFE AND THIS DIDN'T EVEN HAPPEN TO ME.



XAVIER! COME HERE! NOW!



MY MOM JUST YELLED AT ME LIKE I'M THE DOG.

NO, I WANT YOU TO LOOK INTO ANYONE'S PHONE AND TELL THEM HOW PROUD YOU ARE OF TAKING A CHILD'S DREAM AWAY!

HIGH FIVES FOR EVERYONE! A KID'S SOUL HAS BEEN CRUSHED!



YOU REMEMBER MY MOM?

NOW!

I COULDN'T HEAR HER OVER MY MOM.

I'LL SWING BY LATER TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS OKAY.

YOU WILL?



THAT REALLY SUCKED.

MY GUESS?

WHEN THE DUST CLEARS...?

THIS ISN'T A BAD THING.



AND WHERE IS HE, THIS--THIS--THIS TONY STARK PROGRAM THAT FOLLOWS YOU AROUND?

HE NEVER SHUTS UP, AND THE ONE TIME WE NEED HIM TO SAY SOMETHING, HE JUST--

MAYBE THIS IS A TEST.



OH, BABY, I DON'T THINK IT IS.

I KNOW, MA.

OH, YEAH.

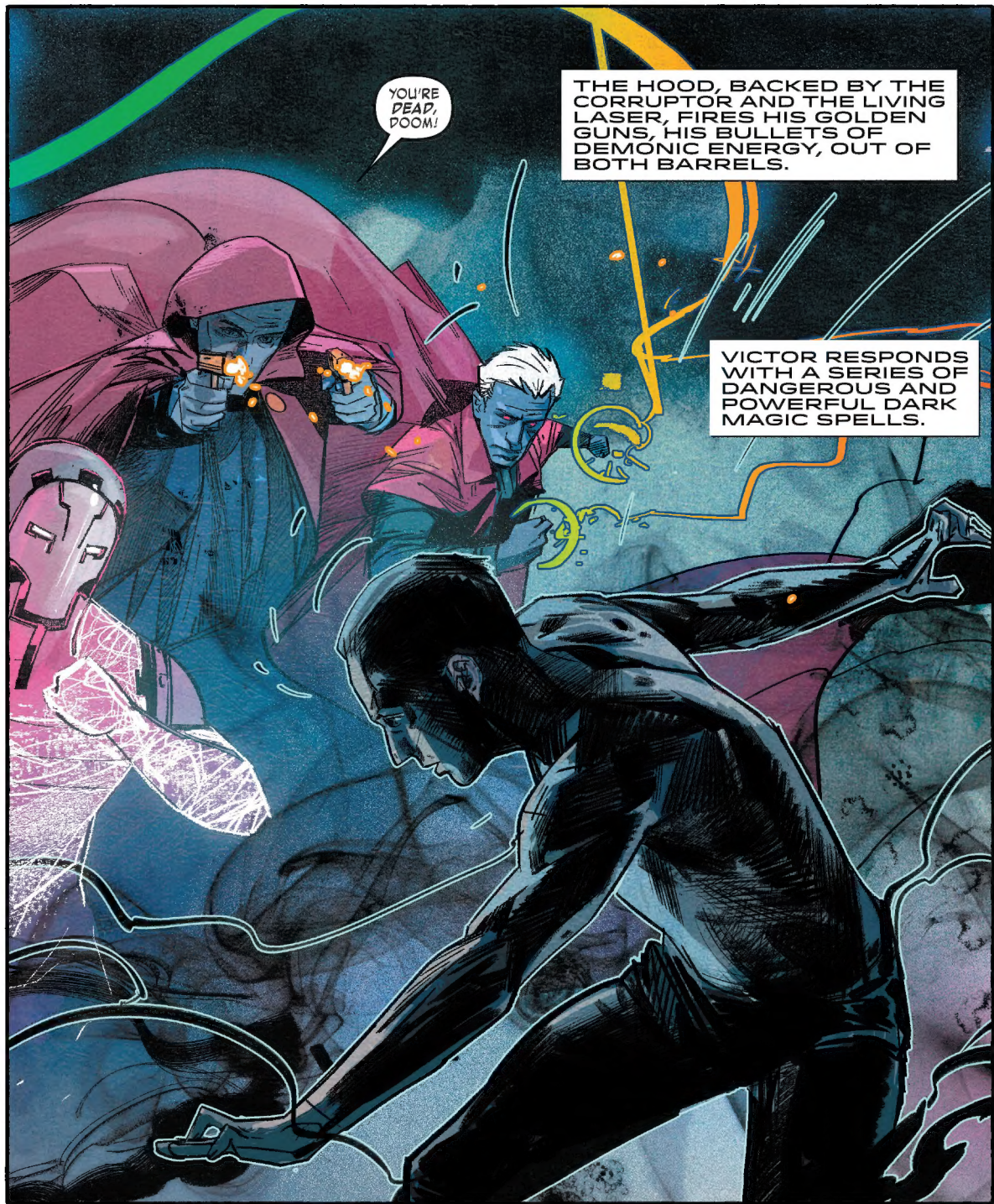
BUUUUUUT YOU HAVE BACKUPS OF ALL OF THIS STUFF THEY TOOK, DON'T YOU?

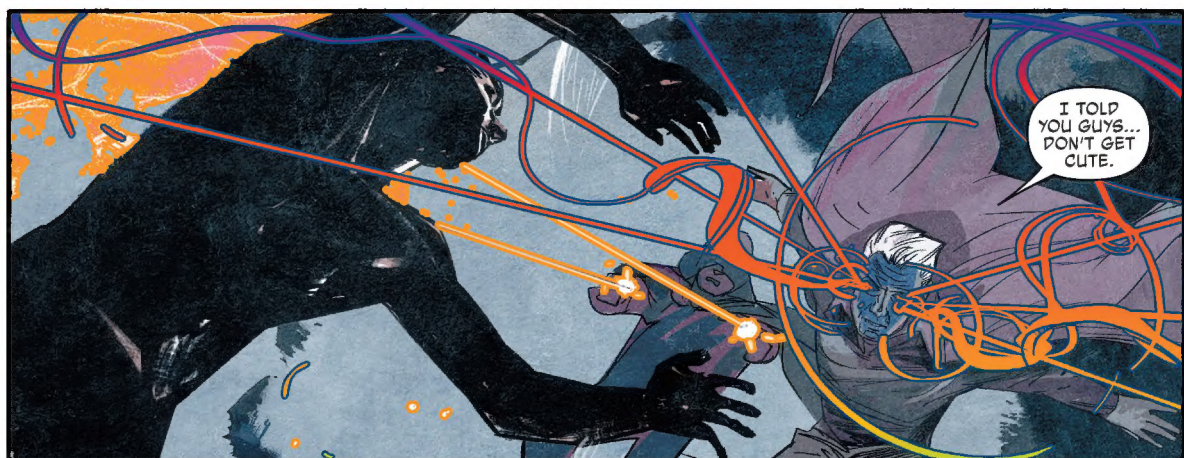
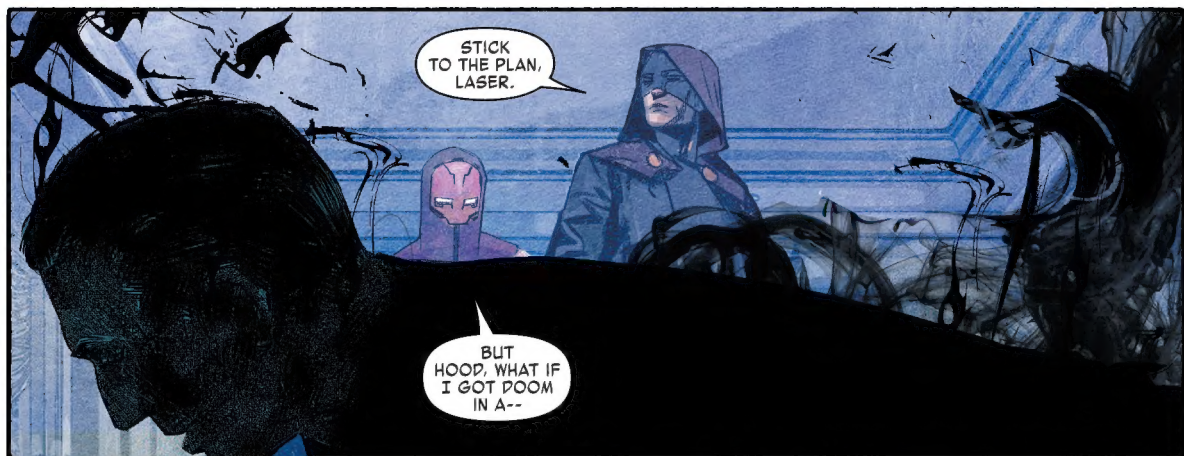
THE FRENCH RIVIERA VILLA
OF VICTOR VON DOOM.

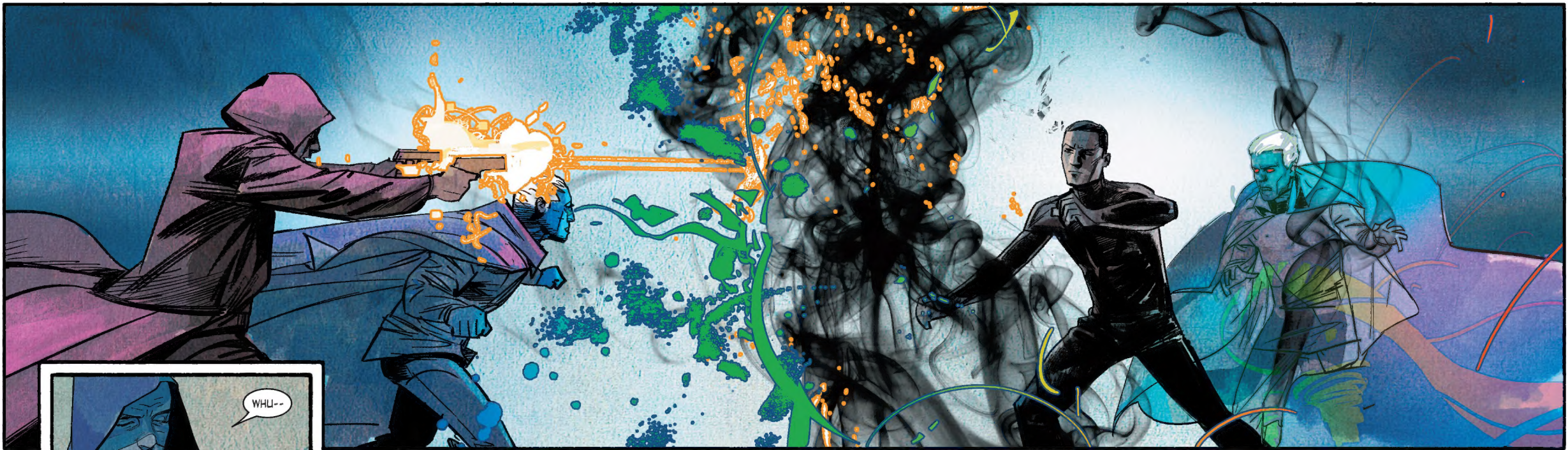
YOU'RE
DEAD,
DOOM!

THE HOOD, BACKED BY THE
CORRUPTOR AND THE LIVING
LASER, FIRES HIS GOLDEN
GUNS, HIS BULLETS OF
DEMONIC ENERGY, OUT OF
BOTH BARRELS.

VICTOR RESPONDS
WITH A SERIES OF
DANGEROUS AND
POWERFUL DARK
MAGIC SPELLS.



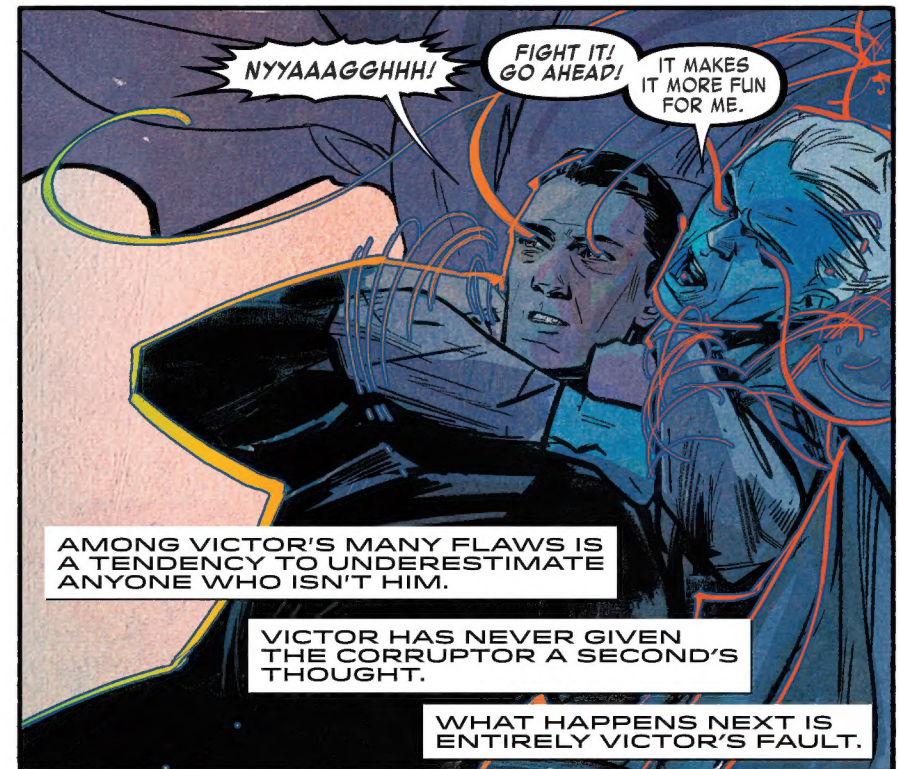
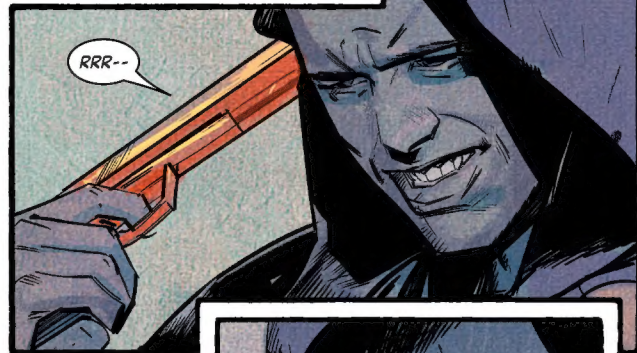


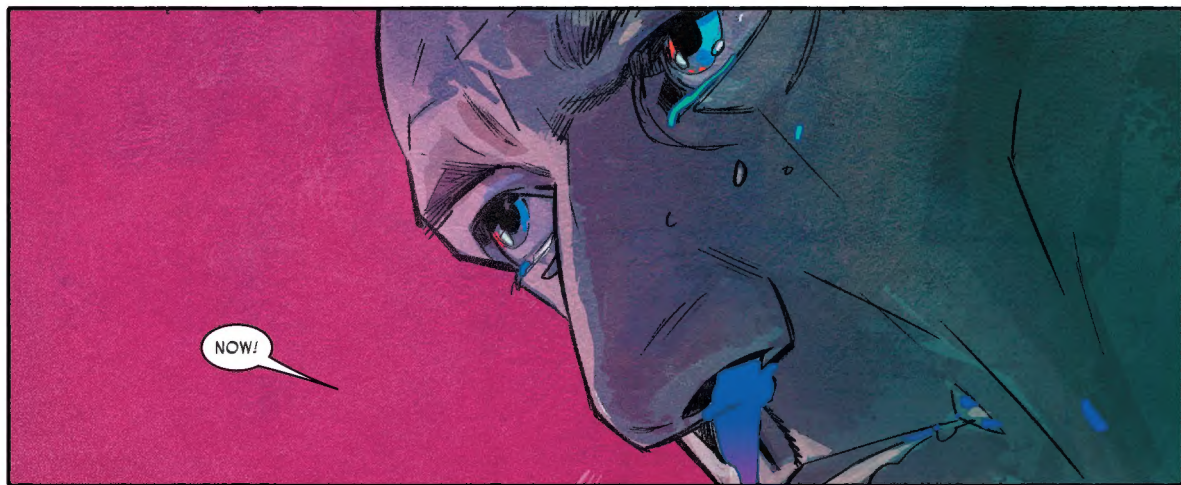


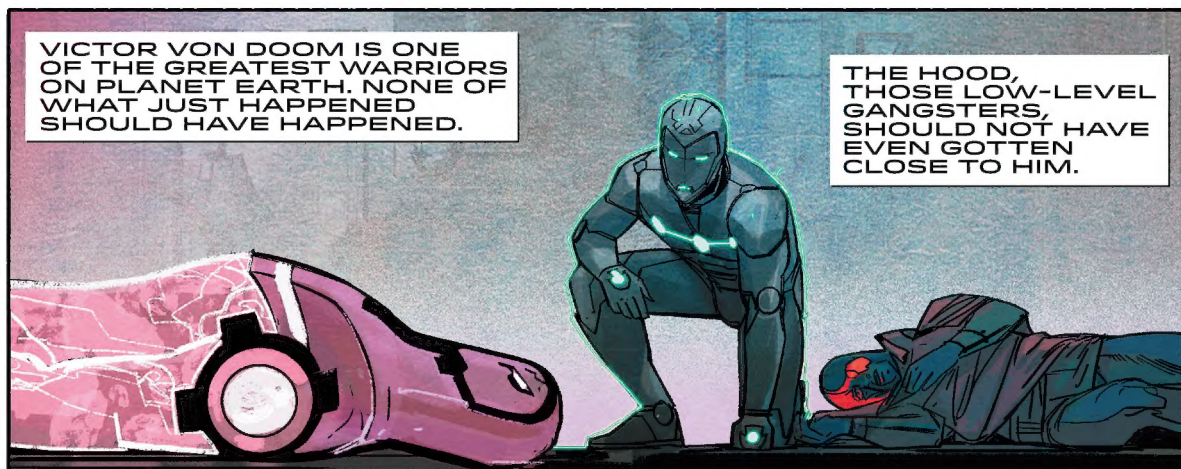
VICTOR HAS MANY SECRET TALENTS. VERY FEW KNOW OF HIS MYSTIC-BASED ABILITY TO CONTROL WEAKER MINDS.



VICTOR LIKES TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.










WHAT
ARE YOU DOING,
TONY?



OKAY.
ALL
RIGHT...



HUH.



I'M SERIOUS.
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING?




HI, DAD.



SAVING
MY OWN
LIFE.

DON'T
STALL
ME.

I ASKED
YOU WHAT
YOU THOUGHT
YOU WERE
DOING.



YOU'RE
PROBABLY
ALREADY DEAD,
BUT YOU'RE TOO
STUBBORN TO EVEN
DO THAT LIKE
EVERYONE
ELSE.



NICE
VISIT,
DAD.

THANKS
FOR STOPPING
BY.



LET'S
GO THROUGH
IT.

WHY AREN'T
YOU ASKING ANYONE
FOR HELP?



FAIR QUESTION.

BECAUSE WHAT I'VE DONE TO MYSELF MAY NOT HAVE BEEN, BY ANYONE ELSE'S STANDARDS, A GOOD IDEA OR EVEN A MORAL IDEA.

INVOLVING ANY OF THE GOOD PEOPLE I KNOW WOULD MAKE THEM ACCESSORIES TO SOMETHING I KNOW THEY DON'T WANT OR NEED ANY PART OF.

AND THE OTHER TYPES...THE "BAD GUYS." YEAH...NOT SO INTO Hoping I CAN TRUST THEM WITH ALL THIS.



I DON'T NEED HELP.

WHY AREN'T YOU ASKING FOR HELP?



YEAH, YOU GOT THIS.

YOU DIDN'T LEARN THIS FROM ME.

I ASK PEOPLE FOR HELP ALL THE TIME.

IF I DON'T KNOW SOMETHING, I ASK.

I DO.

YEAH. IT'S WHAT EVERYONE SAID ABOUT YOU.



WELL, MAYBE THIS IS A TRAIT I GOT FROM MY ACTUAL FATHER.

YOU SANCTIMONIOUS SON OF A ~~*****~~.

I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO HIT ME WITH THAT...



ALL THOSE YEARS...

...YOU WATCHED ME STRUGGLE.

FOR ALL THOSE YEARS...

YOU SAW ME DRINKING MYSELF INTO A STUPOR TO-- TO TRY TO STOP FEELING THAT WAY, AND...

I DON'T KNOW THAT *THAT'S* WHY YOU WERE DRINKING.

AND YOU DON'T, EITHER.

YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE MY FATHER.

YOU LIED.

A LIE THAT BLANKETED EVERYTHING!



I AM YOUR FATHER.

YOU SAW ME STRUGGLE AND YOU NEVER THOUGHT TO TELL ME THIS HUGE MISSING PIECE OF INFORMATION?

A PIECE, BY THE WAY, OF WHICH THERE WAS NOT EVEN A *HINT* OF A *SHRED* OF A *CLUE* FOR ME TO START TO DISCOVER ON MY OWN.

THE ONLY WAY I WOULD *EVER* HAVE KNOWN I WAS ADOPTED IS IF *YOU* TOLD ME, AND *YOU* NEVER DID.

NEITHER DID YOUR MOTHER.

BUT LET'S NOT STOP YOUR SELF-PERPETUATING NARRATIVE OF IDEALIZING HER WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY DEMONIZING ME.



I DIDN'T
KNOW WHO
I WAS.

YOU
NEVER TOLD
ME.

YOU
WATCHED ME
SUFFER.

I
WATCHED YOU
SUFFER.

IS
THAT WHAT
I DID?

I DIDN'T
RAISE YOU FROM
BIRTH?

I DIDN'T
GIVE YOU MY
NAME AND
FORTUNE?

I DIDN'T
PROTECT YOU FROM
DEMONS OF YOUR PAST YOU
HAD NO SAY IN CREATING
SO THE LEAST I COULD
DO WAS **SPARE** YOU
THEM?

WHEN YOU
WERE NINE, I DIDN'T
STAY UP WITH YOU WHEN
YOU WERE SICK WITH A
FEVER SO BAD I THOUGHT
I WAS WATCHING
YOU DIE?

I DIDN'T
GIVE YOU **EVERY**
OPPORTUNITY IN THE
DAMN WORLD TO MAKE
THE MOST OF YOURSELF
AND OF YOUR GOD-
GIVEN BRILLIANCE?

YEAH, I
WAS HARD ON
YOU.

YOU HIT
THE JACKPOT IN
LIFE AND I WANTED
TO MAKE SURE YOU
DID SOMETHING
WITH IT.



AND NOW
YOU'RE IRON
MAN.



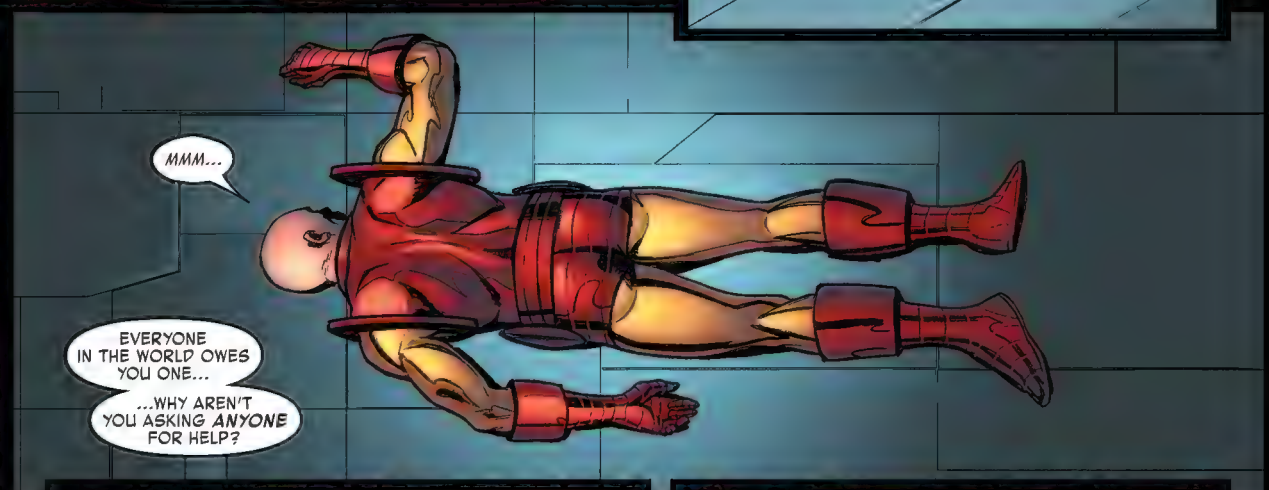
WHY. DIDN'T.
YOU. TELL. ME. I. WAS.
ADOPTED?

HONESTLY.

YOU
ARE MY
SON.

THE OTHER
THING DIDN'T MATTER
TO ME.

SO MUCH SO
THAT I GUESS I
JUST DIDN'T THINK
IT MATTERED.



NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE.

MAKE
A LEFT.

MY HEART
IS TELLING ME
THAT GETTING ANGRY AT A
COMPUTER PROGRAM FOR
FOLLOWING ITS PROGRAMMING
IS A WASTE OF TIME
AND ENERGY.

THAT'S A
GOOD PHILOSOPHY,
AMANDA.

BUT
HOW COULD
YOU?!

750 FEET
THAT WAY, THEN
LEFT.

SERIOUSLY.

I UNDERSTAND
YOUR FRUSTRATION,
AMANDA.

OH,
THANK
YOU!

BUT I AM
A DOWNLOADED
MEMORY PROGRAM
OF TONY
STARK.

I DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT WE
WERE LOOKING FOR
UNTIL YOU ASKED
ME THE DIRECT
QUESTION...

I'M
BEGINNING TO
NOT BELIEVE
YOU.

WELL,
THAT'S
FINE.

I'M NOT
ANYWHERE CLOSE
TO BEING 100 PERCENT
SURE ON THIS
ANYHOW.

BUT YOU
ARE PRETTY
SURE.

PROCESS
OF ELIMINATION,
FRIDAY...PRETTY
SURE.

FRIDAY,
ANYTHING?

I'M
SCANNING THE
ENTIRE ENVIRONMENT,
BUT THE BUILDING ITSELF
IS SHIELDED FROM
MY SCANS.

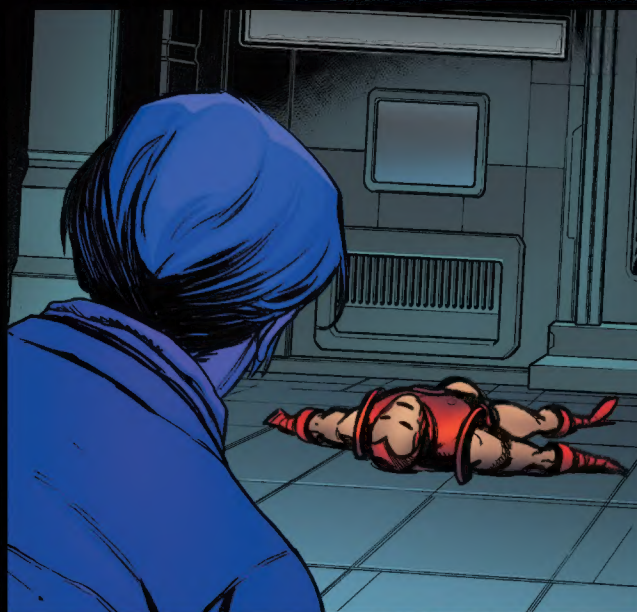
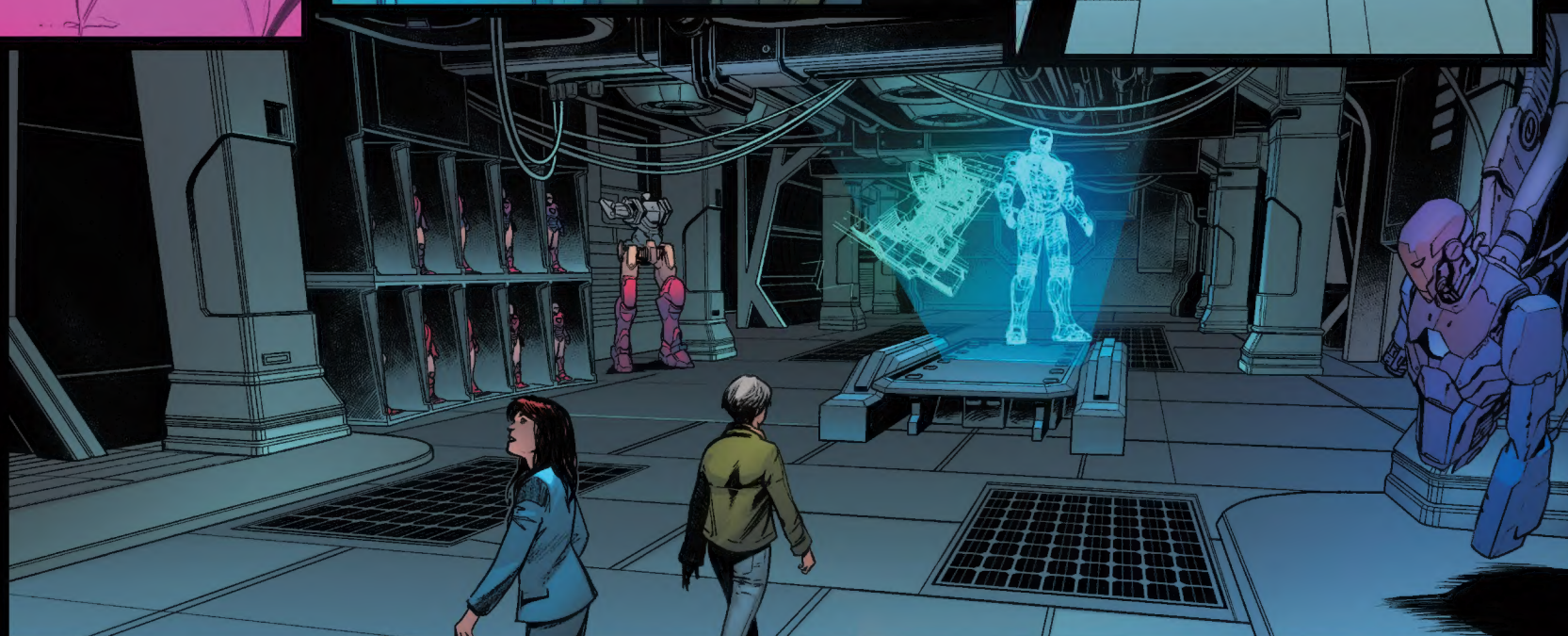
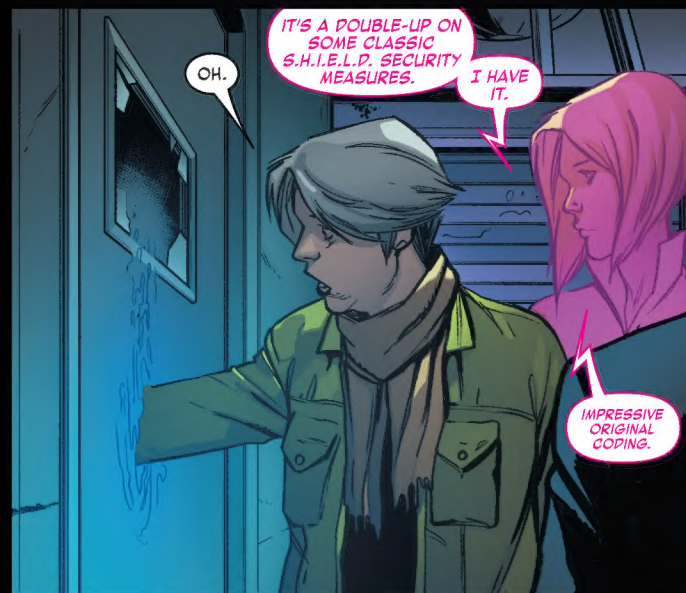
FASCINATING.

SEE?

I
WOULDN'T
EVEN NOTICE
IF I WEREN'T
LOOKING
FOR IT.

PROCESS OF
ELIMINATION.

YOU
SHUT
UP.







TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT ISSUE: INVINCIBLE IRON MAN #597



GRAVE CIRCUMSTANCES!

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